

Dos and Don'ts

Trees for Georgetown (TFG) has completed its planting of sixty new residential street trees. At the request of the DC Urban Forestry Administration (UFA), TFG has also installed fences around each tree box containing a newly transplanted tree. UFA believes that proper fences are second only to water in the fight for survival of these new trees. When it is time to start watering, ooze tubes, donated by UFA and the Casey Trees Endowment Fund, will be provided for each tree.

Street Tree Care

The most important way to help street trees is to water them, protect them from dogs and pedestrians and give them plenty of room to breathe and grow.

Water Water is the single most important component of a young tree's survival.

Do water twice a week, slowly and thoroughly, soaking the ground with 15-20 gallons of water a week. Start watering when new leaves appear in the spring. Continue watering, as needed, until the leaves drop off in the fall.

Don't overwater. Pull mulch away and test soil with your finger -- if it is wet, do not water.

Protection Dog urine is very caustic to both the bark and roots of a tree and as it accumulates in a tree box, it will often kill a tree. Pedestrian traffic over the soil will compact soil, making it impenetrable to water and air. When roots are starved of these crucial elements, the trees become highly stressed and are often colonized by insects or disease pathogens.

Do provide your tree box with **fencing**. Fencing should be at least 18 inches high and installed on only three sides (no fencing is allowed on the curb side), side portions set one foot back from outer edge of curb. Fencing should be minimal and **not** have an impermeable border at sidewalk level that would keep storm water from entering the tree box.

Don't install railroad ties and brick borders as they encourage the addition of excessive dirt which can kill newly transplanted trees.

Room to breathe and grow. Most of our beautifully planted tree boxes are actually harmful to their host trees.

Don't install plantings in tree boxes with newly transplanted trees for at least two, preferably three, years. Digging in the tree box severs tree roots. Adding excessive dirt interferes with the absorption of air and water into the tree well and creates an environment for future rooting problems. Anything additional growing in a tree box "steals" water and nutrients from the tree. All this creates stress and jeopardizes the development of the tree.

Don't over-mulch. Two to four inches of mulch is good; it will retain moisture for roots in the summer and keep them insulated during the winter. Adding more mulch inhibits the flow of air and water to the roots. More than two to four inches of mulch leads to long-term problems.

Don't let mulch touch the tree trunk; it traps moisture which leads to cracking and sloughing of bark allowing fungus, insects and rodents to invade.

Pruning. Trees must be properly pruned in order to survive. Many landscaping companies don't employ certified arborists and consequently irreparable pruning may occur.

Don't prune street trees without a permit.